

(BP)**-- BAPTIST PRESS**

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May 26, 1982

82-80

R. G. Puckett Elected
North Carolina Editor

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)—R. G. (Gene) Puckett has been elected editor of the Biblical Recorder, news journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Puckett, 49, will assume the post Aug. 1, succeeding J. Marse Grant, who is taking early retirement effective Sept. 12, after 22 years as editor of the 116,500-circulation weekly.

Currently, Puckett is executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a national organization headquartered in Silver Springs, Md.

With his election, Puckett becomes the first man in Southern Baptist history to have been editor of three state Baptist newspapers. Previously, he has held the editorship of the Maryland Baptist and the Ohio Baptist Messenger and was associate editor of the Western Recorder, publication of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

He also has been pastor of churches in Kentucky, Lancaster, Ohio, and Dunedin, Fla. He has been president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, a trustee of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Baptist Home of Maryland and a member of the SBC committees on resolutions, boards and order of business.

Puckett, a native of Kentucky, is a graduate of Campbellsville College, Western Kentucky University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, Robbie Lynn, have two daughters, Janet, a law student at Wake Forest University, and Jeanne, who recently graduated from Meredith College in Raleigh.

Puckett, rumored for weeks to be the front runner to succeed Grant, was elected on a split vote of the 16-member board. Board chairman Tommy Joe Payne said the search committee voted 4-3 to invite Puckett to Raleigh for a second interview and then voted 4-3 against recommending him to the entire board of trustees.

"We did not have a recommendation; in fact, we voted not to make a recommendation," Payne told Baptist Press. "Yet the board chose to select him. The vote was 8-5, with one vote not counted, and he accepted the editorship."

The Biblical Recorder and the state convention have been embroiled in controversy, primarily centered on the sale of the North Carolina Baptist Building and relocation.

The controversy began in May of 1980, when the general board voted to sell the downtown office building for \$1.7 million, of which \$600,000 would be in the form of a tax free donation. Grant editorially opposed the sale.

Subsequently, the offer was withdrawn, but messengers to the state convention affirmed the action that the building was for sale.

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Controversy erupted again in January, when another sale was announced, along with plans to relocate on a four-acre site in Cary, a southwestern suburb. Recorder trustees voted to purchase a building site, but said a decision has not been made about whether the Recorder will move to the new building or build its own facilities.

When members of the general board were informed of the decision, they passed a resolution expressing "profound interest" and asking for an explanation of the reasons for the Recorder relocating outside the Baptist building and "the method of funding" a new building.

Puckett told Baptist Press he is "aware of the controversy of the past, but I was not a party to it. My approach will be to be positive, cooperative and supportive of all Baptist leadership in the state."

He added: "I would have preferred to have had a unanimous vote but I believe I understand the situation which prompted the split vote. I am willing to face the issues in a spirit of Baptist brotherhood and fellowship where we respect differences of opinion and honor our common commitment to our cause."

"I am coming to North Carolina as a partner with Baptist leadership in trying to communicate the gospel and to apply it to the whole person. This is a big state in Baptist membership; it is a progressive state with much challenge and opportunity for Baptist growth and witness. I want to be a part of that process."

Grant, who will become editor emeritus after his 62nd birthday Sept. 13, said "this desk is Gene Puckett's desk beginning the day he comes." He added the "title emeritus will mean exactly what the next editor wants it to mean."

He also said he and his wife, Marian, "have a tentative trip to Ireland July 31, and it may come off, after all. Gene is experienced in this work and on-the-job-training would be an insult to him."

Cecil Ray, general secretary-treasurer of the state convention, said: "We have met and I have assured him he will receive a warm welcome from the staff."

Payne noted the postage increase--which more than doubled the weekly bill to mail the state newspaper--"has put us in bad shape, but we are going to work around it some way. We have asked the General Board for \$40,000 for this fiscal year, and that our annual appropriation be increased from \$180,000 to \$250,000."

He also said the "plans for the new (Recorder) building have been put on hold and we will look at that at the appropriate time. We felt we needed to include the new editor on that." Payne added that the \$40,000 parcel of land which was purchased as a site for a Recorder building "could be sold if it comes to that."

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Liver Ailment Takes Life
Of Little M.K. Amy Baker

Baptist Press
5/26/82

HOPKINSVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Ten-month-old Amy Jean Baker's battle with a serious liver ailment ended with her death May 22 in Hopkinsville, Ky.

Baptists across the United States and on mission fields around the world first read about the tiny "missionary kid" last September when her parents, Southern Baptist missionaries Larry and Lou Anne Baker, brought her from Guayaquil, Ecuador, to Vanderbilt Hospital, Nashville, Tenn., for surgery to clear the clogged ducts of her liver.

However, the liver, inflamed since birth, failed to heal properly in the following months. Doctors determined earlier this year that Amy's only hope was a liver transplant, possible only if she could be sustained for 12 months on a special diet.

Amy's mother said her daughter apparently didn't suffer despite her condition. "She was always happy and content and smiling," she said. "The Lord made her real special."

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Missionaries and other Baptists from the United States and several foreign countries have let the Baker family know that they were praying for Amy, Mrs. Baker said. "We've really been able to feel the prayer."

Baker was theological extension teacher in Ecuador and Mrs. Baker, was a church and home worker, when the couple took medical furlough in September. On May 1, they took a leave of absence from the Foreign Mission Board.

The family recently moved to Greenbrier, Tenn., when Baker accepted the pastorate of First Baptist Church. Their plans to return to the mission field are indefinite.

Funeral services for Amy were held May 24 in Hopkinsville. She also was survived by a sister, Juli, 6, and a brother, Timothy, 4.

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Furor Over Graham Quotes Said
Overshadowing Positive Gains

By John Wilkes

Baptist Press
5/26/82

MOSCOW (BP)—The flurry of controversy surrounding Billy Graham's recent visit to the Soviet Union has overshadowed what some observers feel were positive outcomes of the peace conference the evangelist addressed in Moscow.

Despite reported opposition to his visit by President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George Bush, Graham came to the Soviet Union to address the World Conference of Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe.

Speaking on "the Christian faith and peace in a nuclear age," the Baptist evangelist told the nearly 600 religious leaders from 90 countries that "the possibility of nuclear war is not merely a political question but primarily a moral and spiritual one. I am convinced that the basic issue is not merely political, social, economic, or even moral and humanitarian—the problem is the human heart," he declared.

"The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was God's unique son, sent to take away our sins by his death on the cross and making it possible to be at peace with God, at peace within ourselves and at peace with each other," he said.

Conference participants represented most world religions and included Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Sikhs and Zoroastrians, as well as government figures from many nations. More than 400 registered as Christians. Thirty-one were North Americans; some 40 Baptists took part as delegates, observers, guests and conference committee or staff personnel.

Graham said in his address that on the cross—the one symbol common to believers throughout all Christendom—"the possibility of lasting peace in all its dimensions" had been made.

He suggested that participants call the "nations and leaders of the world" to repentance, to a new commitment to peace and justice, and to specific steps leading toward peace. But he also urged those present to a "personal rededication" to the task of being God's peacemakers in the world and he called the peoples of the world to pray for peace.

Graham further appealed for all governments to respect the rights of religious believers according to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Agreement.

Both in his Sunday messages at Moscow Baptist Church and the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church, and his plenary address, he noted that Soviet citizens that week had observed the 37th anniversary of the end of World War II, when "the great peoples of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. were allies" against the common enemy of Nazism.

"Now not only these two great super powers but every other nation again face a common enemy—the threat of nuclear destruction," he warned.

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"It is not too much to hope and pray that we can unite in dedicated alliance against this enemy which threatens to destroy us," Graham concluded.

The evangelist's varied schedule for the week included a meeting with B. Ponomarev, chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the Soviet parliament, and a "Bible-reading prayer" session with the remaining members of the "Siberian Seven" pentecostal family in the United States Embassy.

Baptist World Alliance President Duke K. McCall addressed the participants at the conference on behalf of the EWA, saying the conference documents would be shared with the alliance constituency and will become part of the EWA report to the United Nations' second special session on disarmament in June.

McCall assured the conference that peace is a continuing longtime concern of Baptists.

The conference adopted three final documents: An appeal to the leaders and followers of all religions, an appeal to the governments of the world, and an appeal to the second general session of the U.N. General Assembly on disarmament.

Graham's call for an "end to hostile rhetoric" between world leaders was taken up by the conference and included in the final document which appealed to the leaders and followers of all religions.

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(Wilkes, director of European Baptist Press Service, has just returned from Moscow, where he attended both church services in which Graham preached, the peace conference and Graham's press conference.)

Supreme Court To Review
Laws Restricting Abortion

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
5/26/82

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a series of actions which may indicate significant changes in thinking on one of the country's most volatile social issues, the U.S. Supreme Court announced here it will review abortion laws from two states and a city during its next term.

By agreeing to rule in five separate cases from Akron, Ohio, Missouri and Virginia, the high court seems poised to issue its most comprehensive findings on abortion since its landmark 1973 decisions outlawing abortion laws in some 40 states.

Those decisions, among the most disputed ever handed down, held basically that a woman in consultation with her physician possesses a constitutional right to have an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. During the second trimester, the court ruled further, the state has an escalating interest in protecting fetal life and may thus impose some regulations. During the last three months the state's interest is so compelling as to permit an outright ban on abortions, the court ruled.

Anti-abortion activists, reacting to those decisions, have successfully pushed state legislatures and city governments to impose new regulations to restrict the availability of abortions, while working on the federal level for a constitutional amendment to ban all abortions except those to save the lives of mothers.

Among such successes is an Akron ordinance requiring underage young women to obtain parental consent before having an abortion, requiring attending physicians to give detailed and graphic information about fetal life to women seeking an abortion, and requiring a 24-hour waiting period after the decision has been made to have the abortion. All three requirements were struck down earlier by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

But the same court upheld provisions in the Akron law requiring all second trimester abortions to be performed in hospitals and making mandatory that parents be notified when minor girls seek abortions. A separate provision, mandating that the remains of aborted fetuses be disposed of in a "humane and sanitary manner," was declared void because of vagueness.

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The Supreme Court also agreed to hear challenges to a Missouri law, parts of which have been upheld but other portions rejected by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

That court struck down provisions requiring hospitalization as well as a second physician's presence during abortions performed in the second trimester and a separate requirement that fetal tissue samples be submitted to a pathologist for examination and a report.

Also at issue in the Missouri law are requirements of parental consent and notification. The appeals court upheld a portion of the law calling for consent by a girl's parents or by a judge if she chose not to seek parental permission. At the same time the court declared unconstitutional a provision requiring a girl to give notice to her parents that she was seeking judicial rather than parental consent.

In another case the high court will review the criminal conviction of a Virginia physician who performed a second trimester abortion in a clinic rather than in a hospital as required by state law. Dr. Chris Simopoulos will argue that the law is defective in that it makes no exceptions for "medically necessary" abortions outside hospitals.

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Northwest Woman
'Agent of Lord'

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
5/26/82

LONGVIEW, Wash. (BP)--For nearly 30 years a 65-year-old Washington woman has sent every Southern Baptist foreign and home missionary an annual personalized birthday card, prompting a missionary in Israel to call her a "special agent of the Lord."

"I wanted to be a missionary so bad when I was a young girl, but I didn't get to go on to school, then I got married," says Catherine Schneider.

Now she spends up to six hours a night, seven days a week, making handcrafted birthday cards for nearly 6,000 missionaries with postage costing more than \$1,000 a year.

"I don't like television, so I start about 6:30 each night and work until about 1 a.m. making the cards," she said. Schneider uses pictures cut out of magazines, old birthday card backs and many other items to personally create each birthday card. A friend, Gertrude Philpott, helps her assemble the nearly 500 sent each month throughout the world.

"They care so much they even make sure the card is mailed far enough in advance to allow for foreign mail," a missionary in Honduras wrote the Northwest Baptist Witness newspaper.

"The card always arrives on time. They also check out the postage at the post office because it is always correct for the boat, land or regular letter or card they send. They never ask for anything--always giving greetings and love. It is so uplifting to get cards like this from people who so obviously care about the Lord's work and the 'laborers' he sends," wrote Marina Menzies, Southern Baptist missionary in Honduras.

In 1950 when Schneider joined First Baptist Church, Longview, Wash., she was selling greeting cards parttime. In 1952, around Christmas, she decided to get rid of a backlog of birthday cards by sending them to missionaries. Thirty years later she is still doing it. "Evidently it's the Lord," she said, "every day I want to do it!"

When she first started it cost five cents to mail an overseas letter, not sealed, with a card in it. Postage in the United States was three cents. Now it costs 30 cents for an overseas letter, 19 cents for a card overseas, and 13 cents for a card in the U.S. Her postage bill each year is over \$1,000. She said she doesn't worry about the cost because even when it is tight, somehow the postage is taken care of.

About eight and a half years ago she married Ewald Schneider and now all the cards are signed "Catherine and Ewald Schneider." Yes, he knew about her commitment each day before they got married.

"He licks the stamps, stamps the return address, goes to the post office and puts up with it," chuckled Mrs. Schneider.